



2016 STARTINGBLOC TRANSPARENCY REPORT

“They will remind you that the world is huge and strange and wonderful. You will let them know that they can be at home here. That the careers and cars and jobs and degrees that are coming will not alone make them who they are. That connection is key. That conversation is key. That they are free but cared for.”

Jedidiah Jenkins

THE TRIUMPH OF THE COMMONS

In 2009, Elinor Ostrom became the first woman ever to win the Nobel Prize in Economics for her work debunking popular theories about the “Tragedy of the Commons. ”

Her fieldwork extensively documents how communities around the world cooperate to successfully govern common resources such as forests, pastures, irrigation systems, and fisheries.

[Ms. Ostrom's work](#) goes on to offer eight design principles for how commons are managed sustainably and equitably. Well-designed institutions are crucial. Decision-making must be inclusive. Effective monitoring is essential. Good mechanisms for conflict resolution are needed. And so on.

My fellow humans, we live in turbulent times. But we are not locked into an unavoidable race to disaster.

Our biggest challenges—climate change, poverty, hunger, injustice, and disease—are the result of badly managed Commons. They are collective action problems. We can tackle them. We must tackle them. To StartingBloc Fellows, the possibility of well-managed Commons is obvious. We are part of a community where opportunities, expertise, and social

capital are freely shared and well-managed. StartingBloc exists to grow and convene the leaders our world needs. 83% of Fellows ask for and receive help from the community. Most Fellows agree that their effective network grows tremendously after StartingBloc. And for many Fellows, StartingBloc fundamentally shifts and accelerates their work and their impact on the world. For the StartingBloc team, 2016 was a year of consistent iteration and improvement. We ran four highly-rated institutes in LA, NOLA, NY, and DC, each time listening to feedback and making adjustments to the program.

In 2016: We welcomed 321 new Fellows. We strived to make StartingBloc accessible by offering more than twice as many Fellows some level of need-based scholarship. At our Institutes, our Inclusion workshop went from one of the least valuable sessions to one of the most valuable ones. We improved our application and review systems. We overhauled our Fellows CRM. We upgraded our payment gateway. We launched a pro-bono coaching program. And we ran a fundraising campaign that brought in \$56k.

We also ran experiments that failed. Despite investing in systems, referrals, and advertising, we missed our recruitment goals. Eliminating the application fee

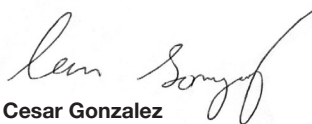
failed to bring in new applicants. We awarded more scholarships than we could afford to. And we spun our wheels on partnership building.

Nonetheless, we are proud of our progress. We are poised and ready to deepen our impact. We have a model that works for growing and connecting leaders to build a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. We have the systems in place to grow. We have a talented and committed team. And we have the most real, most engaged, and most tenacious community of change leaders we've ever seen.

2017 is big for StartingBloc. We will implement two new structures to better support Fellows. We will prepare to launch an institute outside the US. And we will raise at least \$100,000 to deepen StartingBloc's impact.

Our team is excited, committed, and grateful for the opportunity to serve.

Onwards,

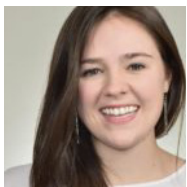

Cesar Gonzalez
CEO, StartingBloc

MEET THE STARTINGBLOC TEAM



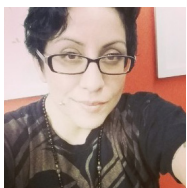
Kristine Sloan, Director of Operations

Everyone can participate in cultivating the good in our world. This fact is both terrifyingly large and absolutely actionable—and Kristine loves a good action item. She holds a Masters of International Studies specializing in Rural Development and has built a career creating efficiencies in resource constrained environments.



Annika Erickson-Pearson, Director of Search

Annika is the consummate people-person and token extrovert on the StartingBloc staff. She believes deeply in the potential and capacity of every person she comes across, and knows that humans have the power to make the world a better, kinder, and more inclusive place. Having spent her career in community organizing, Annika values authenticity, curiosity, drive, and the curative power of a good hug.



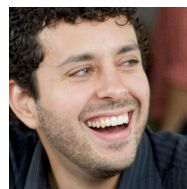
Daniela Capistrano, Social Media Consultant

Daniela tells stories with words, art, and tech. Her agency helps businesses and nonprofits meet revenue/engagement goals through compelling storytelling, digital strategy, audience development, and project management. She is the founder of POC Zine Project, and is Queer, Poly, and Chicana.



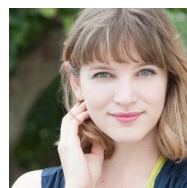
Mehron Price, Fundraising Consultant

Mehron is the Founder of Grants on a Mission, LLC., a fundraising consultancy that helps nonprofits develop sustainable fundraising strategies. Mehron has helped nonprofits raise \$3M+ over the tenure of her career in nonprofit fundraising. Mehron served as the Associate Development Manager and lead grant writer for the Taproot Foundation DC.



Cesar Gonzalez, CEO

Cesar believes that, for the first time in human history, we have the real opportunity, the tools, and the will to build a world that works for everyone. He lives out this belief by supporting leaders of change to build the skills, the alliances, and the strength they will need to bend the arc of history. Cesar has a degree in Computer Engineering from Caltech, he is an Unreasonable Fellow, a StartingBloc Fellow, and has training and experience as a facilitator and speaker.



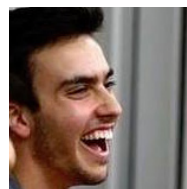
Kat Smith, Former Director of Communication

Kat is a mix of marketer, writer and planner. She has a background in digital marketing, operations and event planning. She believes in the power of good communication and the importance of authenticity. She is a graduate of the University of Denver and considers Colorado her true home.



Michael Williams, Former Director of Partnerships

As a serial entrepreneur, Michael founded Goodwin Investment Advisory & Williams and Jansen Investments, which lead him to invest in the launch of High Road Craft Ice Cream. Michael is currently the Managing Director of Gold Lake Retreats.



Joel Spiegel, Former Communications Apprentice

Joel Spiegel is a Junior at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a NOLA'16 Fellow. A Political Science and Sustainable Community Development double major, Joel is interested in the role of high tech industry in urban economic development, and its effects on sociopolitical urban climates.



Kim Miller, Former Administrative Assistant

Kim has been a Business Vision Advisor and Administrator for 10 years. She loves to organize and tackle new tasks, with a motto of “learn something new every day!”. Kim loves to travel with her family and friends. She is also an avid dog lover.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Mitchell Wade, Board Chair

Mitchell Wade helps innovators turn insights into change. At Choice Humanitarian, Mitchell and his team helped 60,000 people escape extreme poverty, quadrupled per-dollar impact, and launched their organizations toward sustainability.



Vikas Singhal, Board Treasurer

Vikas is an entrepreneur and investor and works with a number of specialty lending businesses as well as technology start-ups. Vikas has previously held positions at UBS Investment Bank in the Structured Products Group working to develop novel funding solutions for a variety of the bank's clients, as well as with Ashoka as a pro bono consultant to their Social Financial Services Group.



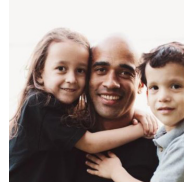
Mary Galeti, Board Member

Mary currently serves as Vice-Chair of the Tecovas Foundation. Mary's experiences in the interactions between philanthropy and social entrepreneurship space have driven her to become a leader in the emerging generation of philanthropists.



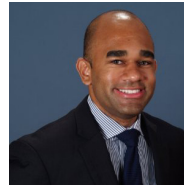
Cheryl Yaffe Kiser, Board Member

Cheryl is the Executive Director of The Lewis Institute and The Babson Social Innovation Lab, and is responsible for leading a critical aspect of the growth strategy for Babson by promoting broad support for Babson's work in integrating social innovation and social relevance into its curriculum and co-curricular activities.




J. Todd Smith, 2016 Board Member

Named "America's Most Promising Social Entrepreneur" by Bloomberg Businessweek, Todd is the co-founder and CEO of Oxen Innovation, a food systems innovation company enabling the next generation of hyperlocal, sustainable, and transparent agriculture.



Whitney Smith, Board Member

Whitney works in Development Finance with the Douglas Development Corporation. He has worked with teams to manage approximately \$2.1 billion of private funds, with global placement using research based investment strategies. Whitney acts as Executive Director of Sustainable Strength a not-for-profit organization focused on sustainable economic and infrastructural development in urban areas.



*“It is our
duty to fight for
our freedom. It is
our duty to win.
We must love
and support
each other.
We have
nothing to
lose but
our cha-
ins.”*

Assata Shakur

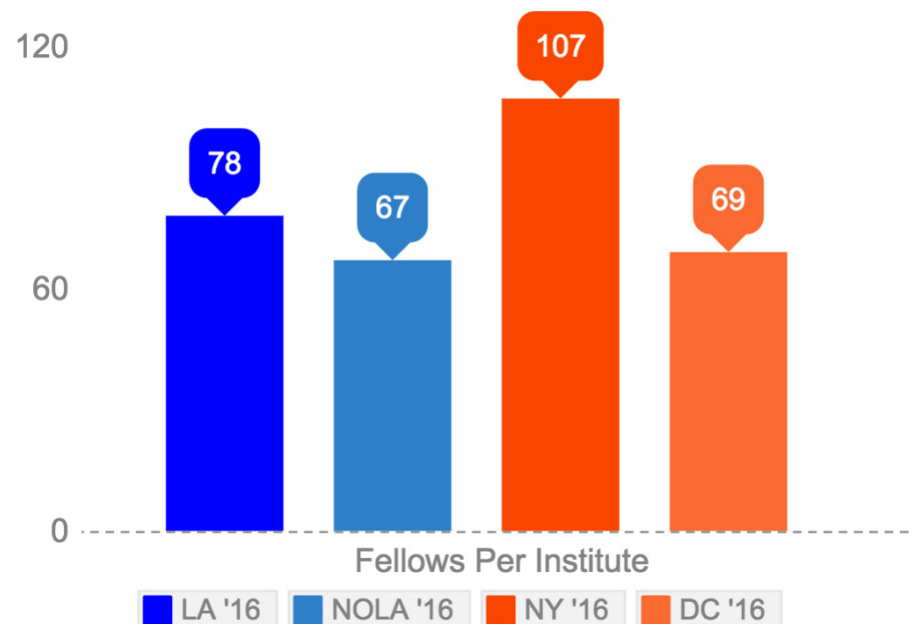
THE EVOLVING FELLOWSHIP

This year, StartingBloc welcomed 321 new Fellows. They ranged in age from 19 to 70, with the average age this year rising to 28. Our Fellowship continues to be international and inclusive, with 21% of Fellows hailing from 26 foreign countries, and 61% of them identifying as persons of color.

The most notable trend this year is that a full 53% of incoming Fellows consider themselves professionals, while 16% call themselves entrepreneurs.

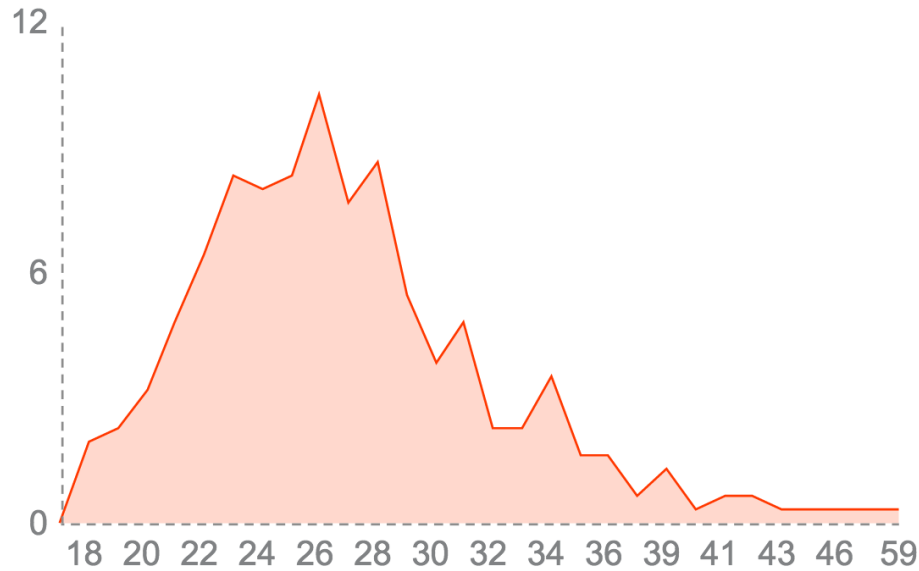


NEW FELLOWS PER INSTITUTE

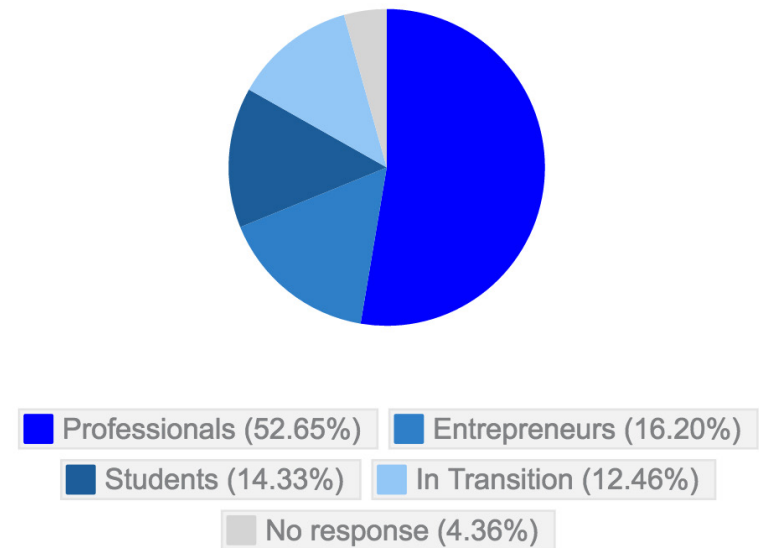


THE EVOLVING FELLOWSHIP

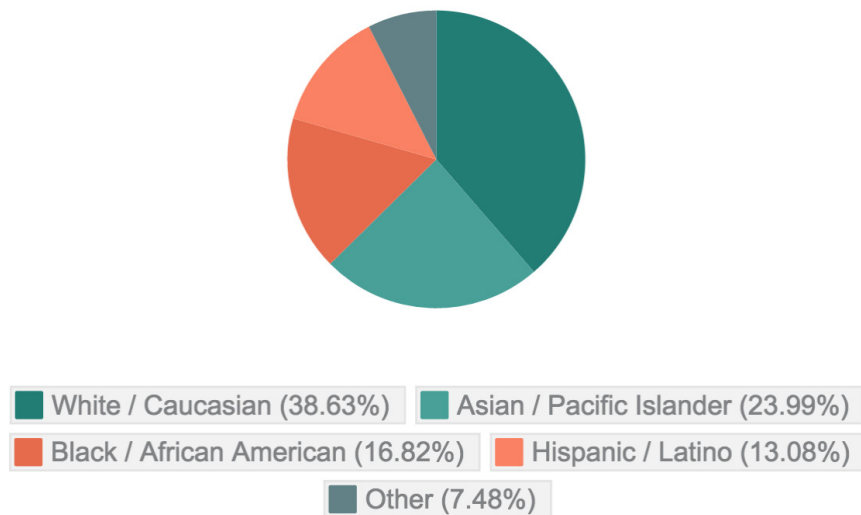
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE FELLOWS



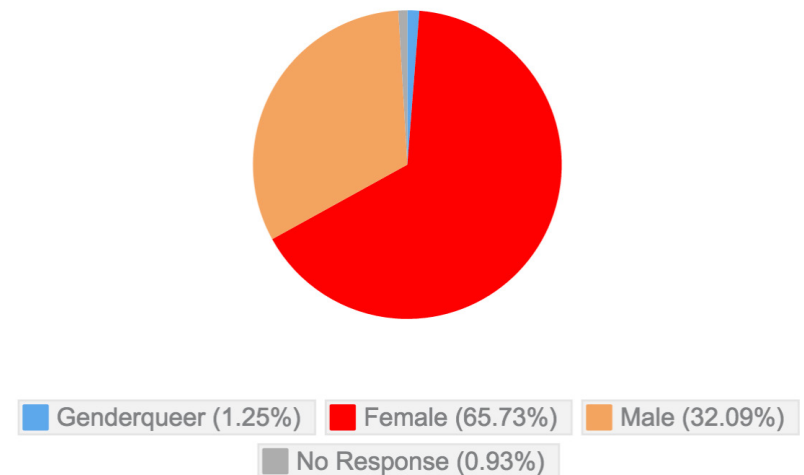
HOW 2016 FELLOWS IDENTIFY



RACE/ETHNICITY OF 2016 FELLOWS



GENDER IDENTITY OF 2016 FELLOWS





CELEBRATING OUR WINS

“I’m forever grateful to StartingBloc for helping me to find more of myself through connecting to an incredible tribe of humans and providing me valuable tools to take back into the world.”

Cortni Grange, NOLA’16 Fellow



Steady Improvement

In 2016, we got better. Through continual feedback and iteration, we improved our curriculum, we improved our scholarship program, we improved our messaging, and we lowered the costs to deliver an Institute.

We doubled down on need-based scholarships because they create access and build an inclusive community. In 2015 we had awarded \$78k in scholarships, and \$30k of it was used by incoming Fellows. In 2016 we awarded a whopping \$190k in scholarships, and \$83k of it was used by incoming Fellows.

Our Inclusion Workshop went from being the least valuable in 2015, to being one of the most valuable in 2016. We worked with other returning speakers to improve their workshops based on Fellow feedback.

We tested different types of evening events and kept what works. We also introduced an Unconference-style session where new Fellows learn from each others’ expertise.

In the summer we decided to update the StartingBloc video. We recorded new footage and interviews, got Fellow feedback, and teamed up with Boulder-based Balcony9 Media to better communicate what is at the heart of StartingBloc. While our original video accumulated 18k views in two years, [our new video](#) was viewed 14k times in just two weeks.

Finally, our Fellows iterated on the **#Unplugged** event model and a team of 5 designed and delivered a 3-day event for 65 returning Fellows themed around Biomimicry and held in San Francisco.

CELEBRATING OUR WINS

“The power of this community is real. Last night, Rachel, Bose Ronjon, Bella, Joanna, Jason, Bracy, and Sara took time out of their busy schedules to come to USC and help my classmates and me on a business project that we will be presenting next week in Hong Kong. You all have no idea how much your critical feedback and words of encouragement meant to me and my teammates! I'm overwhelmed with gratitude to be part of the StartingBloc tribe—last night just showed what its truly all about. #community #collaboration #thankful #lucky!”

Megan Strawther, LA'16 Mentor

We Overhauled our Internal Systems

In January to April of 2016 we rebuilt our application and scholarship systems, we implemented an application review platform, we organized 13 years of relationship data into a single CRM, we streamlined our payment gateway, and we got the different systems talking with each other.

In just eight months, this work has saved us hundreds of hours, simplified our most frequent tasks, improved our responsiveness, increased internal accountability, and, perhaps most importantly, it has set us up to scale.

For the curious amongst you, our application is built on Wufoo and channels directly into our Decision. IO review platform. We use a free Hubspot CRM for applicant management, and it's tied to Mandrill and Mailchimp for automated emails. Payment forms are built with Wufoo and Paypal Pro, and everything is tied together with Zapier, bubble gum, and prayers

We Launched a Pro-Bono Coaching Program

Developing a leadership style that impacts the world positively takes more support than we can provide at a single Institute. Coaching is one of the most consistent levers we know of to help people achieve their goals and their mission over time. That's why in April we launched the StartingBloc Coaching Program. The program awards 12 sessions of pro-bono professional coaching to three deserving Fellows each month.

We built this program with Renee Freedman & Co, who also built the coaching programs for the TED Fellows, the Sundance Institute, and the

Unreasonable Institute. So far, 21 Fellows have received coaching awards, and the feedback we are getting is fantastic.

A Better Experience for Mentors

Our Mentor role is crucial both to the Institute experience, and to how our community builds its culture. In 2016 we worked to improve the Mentor role experience both for new Fellows and for the Mentors themselves. We gave more attention to mentor selection, and we updated the requirements, the materials, and the pre-institute training call.

During the Institute, Mentors also attend a facilitation training, which supports their work with their breakout groups and gives them tools to take home. We also created a Mentor Lead role, so Mentors have an experienced person they can turn to for help. Nils Klinkenberg (BOS '11) served as sole Mentor Lead for three Institutes. The NY '16 Mentor team was co-led by Ellie Bahrmassel (DC '14) and Nils.

We Raised \$57,831 in 51 Days

After focusing on execution and excellence for the past 2 years, StartingBloc is ready to scale its impact. This will require new funding, and we jumped into a season of fundraising with a \$50K in 50 Days sprint.

Over 50 days in the summer, we received funds from the Sequoia Foundation, the Elliot Badgley Foundation, 43 Fellows, and many other anonymous donors and surpassed our goal. The funding went to operational expenses, scholarship awards, and to hire our new Director of Search, Annika Erickson-Pearson.

*“But beware of
looking for goals:
look for a way of life.”*

WHERE WE'VE FAILED IN 2016



We're Still Not Filling Institutes

The number of incoming Fellows has stayed around 320 per year since 2014. We consider a full Institute to be 100 new Fellows, so at four Institutes, we missed out on supporting an additional 80 change leaders in 2016. We missed out on amplifying their impact, we missed out on the value they would add and receive from our community, and we missed on the revenue they would generate for StartingBloc.

Despite creating new marketing materials, overhauling our systems, removing our application fee, awarding more scholarships, and experimenting with paid ads, our recruitment numbers didn't budge. That's why in the fall we hired Annika Erickson-Pearson into a new Director of Search role whose key responsibility is to find great Fellows and fill Institutes.

We're Still Not Taking Enough Care of Our Team

We named this as a failure in 2014. Since then, we have raised salaries each year, scaled back workloads, and scheduled more time off. But we're not there yet. At \$43,000 each, our team's salaries are below-market for Colorado. We don't yet offer health care or a health care stipend, we don't offer retirement benefits, and we don't have a budget for professional development.

To build a thriving world we must start with a thriving team. That is why taking care of our team is a key priority for 2017. Our plan is to raise salaries, offer a health care stipend, invest in professional development, and take Fridays off all summer.

WHERE WE'VE FAILED IN 2016

"I love that SB brought together a truly diverse group and made us peers and co-collaborators. One of my all-time favorite quotes is by Christopher Reeve, "So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable." I think experiences like SB show us that our continuing journey to realize our great potential to create social impact is...inevitable"

Neetal Parekh, LA'16 Fellow

We Spread Ourselves Thin

We came into 2016 with two clear themes -- to improve Systems and to build Partnerships. We made great progress on systems, and spun our wheels on partnerships. We hired a Director of Partnerships, but it was a short-lived contractor role. And while we maintained and deepened existing partnerships, we did not forge many new ones.

Instead of new partnerships, we focused on other priorities, many of which became our core wins. We missed out on opportunities to reach new communities, opportunities for sponsorship revenue, and opportunities to collaborate with others in the space

As we head into 2017 we intend to heed the words of StartingBloc speaker Emily Kerr who says, "the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." And the main thing in 2017 is to fund the growing vision for StartingBloc.

Not Enough Support for Regional Fellow Groups

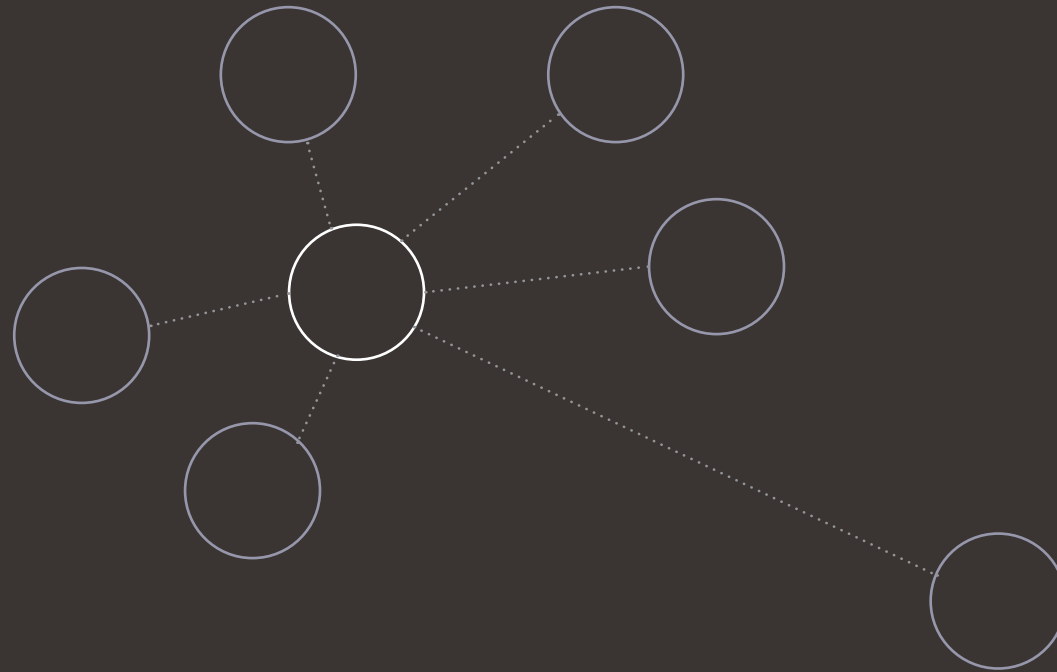
Cities like Boston, Los Angeles, New York, Washington DC, New Orleans, San Francisco, Chicago and others have high concentrations of Fellows and active StartingBloc communities. These Regional Groups communicate with local Fellows, plan events, share opportunities, and support our recruitment efforts.

Leaders in these groups have asked for clarity and support around things like chapter structure, succession planning, sharing lists of Fellows, event support, and using our communications channels. As a team we are supportive and grateful for the work of our Regional leaders, and yet we did not have the capacity to co-create the structures, come to the clarity, and build the systems and toolkits that they need. Instead, Regional leaders took matters into their hands and created their own structures and practices. Our plan in 2017 is to help Regional Groups share best practices with each other, and to devote part of our next hire's capacity to this work.

Our Application Fee Experiment Failed

In April, we removed our long-standing \$40 application fee with the hypothesis that this would increase the number of applications we received. Instead, after evaluating for two recruitment cycles, we found that application numbers didn't change, but instead the perceived quality of applications went down and we lost \$8,000 in application fees without making it up in attendance. As of December, we have reinstated the \$40 fee and we offer to waive the fee on a case-by-case basis.

“A person is a person through other persons.”



THE VITAL ROLE OF THE MENTOR

By Nils Klinkenberg

At StartingBloc, a Mentor is a Fellow from a past Institute who comes back to facilitate, coach, and support a small group of incoming Fellows through their Institute experience. Mentors attend the entirety of an Institute, meet with their breakout group each day, and assist with other aspects of programming. Mentors also model the culture of our community by showing up with a collaborative mindset, humility, curiosity, authenticity, and a willingness to be playful.

StartingBloc looks for Mentors who are engaged in our community, who have experience in facilitation or coaching, and who are committed to building a constructive experience for new Fellows. We also work to mirror the diversity of our cohorts in our Mentor team.

In 2016 StartingBloc worked to provide more structure and support to our Mentors. Mentors practice facilitation techniques together in a Thursday afternoon workshop, they get in-depth preparation



THE VITAL ROLE OF THE MENTOR

"Mentoring with StartingBloc was an invaluable experience for me. I learned so much about facilitating groups, actively listening, resolving conflict, and fostering inclusivity. My Institute as a Fellow grew me as an individual, and my Institute as a mentor grew me even more as a leader."

Mehron Price, First-time Mentor at DC '16



for the sessions they support, and they have a designated support person they can turn to as they work with their breakout groups.

Mentoring at an Institute is a great opportunity to practice important leadership skills such as facilitating conversations, deep listening, helping groups solve problems, and supporting the personal development journeys of others. Mentors sit in on most of the Institute content, they learn from each other, and they get to build ties with the newest class of StartingBloc Fellows.

Nils Klinkenberg (BOS '11) (above) has attended over 20 StartingBloc Institutes and events, has Mentored at 13 Institutes, and has acted as Lead Mentor the majority of the 2016 Institutes. Nils plays a huge part in the growth of the Mentor program and of each individual Mentor.

"Mentoring has allowed me to further immerse myself in this incredible community of game changers. I've gained life-long friends from around the globe at each institute I've attended. I'm also able to grow my knowledge and skill set with each return as the curriculum evolves and expands between institutes. This includes the ability to better facilitate small group dynamics for cohesion and outcomes."

Ellie Barhmasel, Lead Mentor at NOLA

“Those who say it can't be done...

...are usually interrupted by others doing it.”

James Baldwin

STARTINGBLOC'S 2016 FINANCES

2016 was another solid year for StartingBloc. Our budget grew for the fourth year in a row, we diversified our income streams, we raised salaries, we lowered costs by \$41,057, and we awarded twice as much scholarship funding as last year.

An Overview of 2016

Our total budget increased modestly in 2016, largely due to our summer fundraising campaign that brought in \$57,831. By booking venues early and negotiating catering costs, we were also able to decrease the cost of running Institutes by an incredible \$41,057. These factors allowed us to increase team salaries, offer more scholarship funding, and bring on a fourth teammate in November.

2016 Fellows utilized \$83k in scholarship funding, as compared to \$30k last year. So despite higher attendance than last year, revenue from tuitions decreased by \$18k, and revenue from application fees decreased by \$8k.

For the past three years, StartingBloc operated strictly as a business, generating all our revenue from programs. In 2016, we began to diversify our income streams. This year, 14% of our budget came from fundraising, 4% from sponsorship revenue, and 82% from tuition revenue.

Scholarships & Inclusion

We awarded more scholarship funding in 2016 than ever before. We offered a whopping \$190k in scholarships, and \$83k of that was utilized by incoming Fellows.

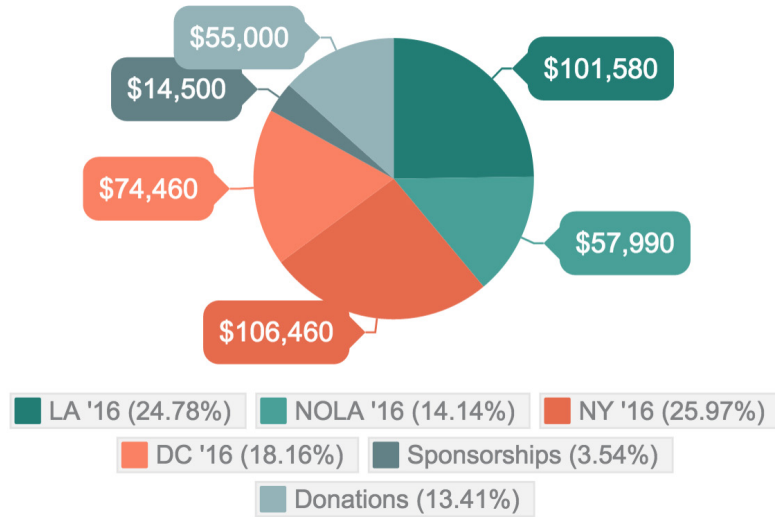
This represents a 276% increase from last year, and truly demonstrates our commitment to building an inclusive Fellowship. We did this by shifting our scholarship award from a set amount per Institute to a more flexible structure that allowed us to allocate funds based on the needs of applicants, and our own costs of running each Institute.

In our enthusiasm to be inclusive, we offered more scholarship funding than we could afford to. We generated \$18k less in tuition revenue than last year, and this forced us to divert some of our philanthropic dollars to scholarships, rather than the growth efforts they were earmarked for.

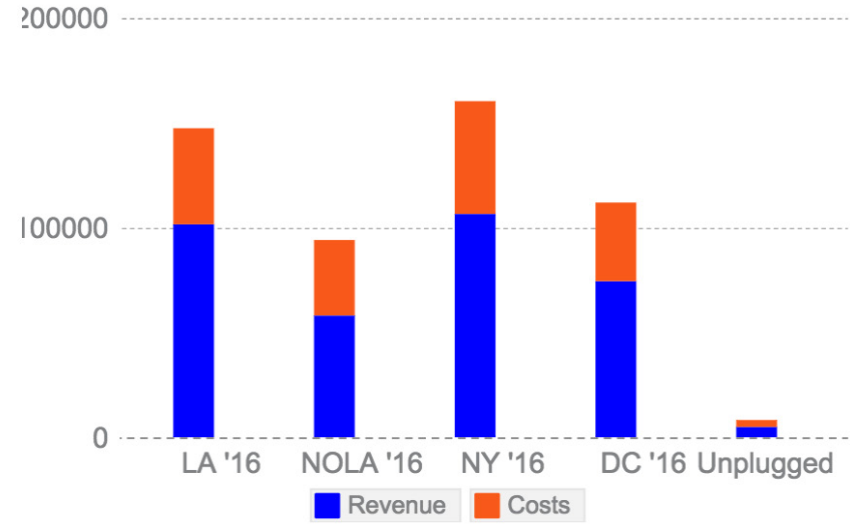
In 2017, our goal is to increase tuition revenue while continuing to honor our incoming Fellows' financial needs. We will continue to invest heavily in scholarships, while also working to provide incoming Fellows with other creative strategies for paying tuition and securing travel and accommodation funding.

STARTINGBLOC 2016 FINANCES

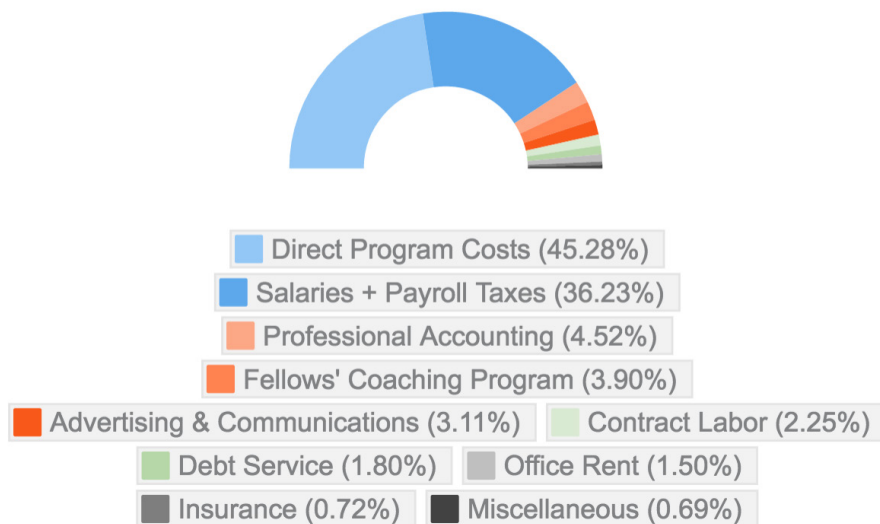
2016 REVENUE



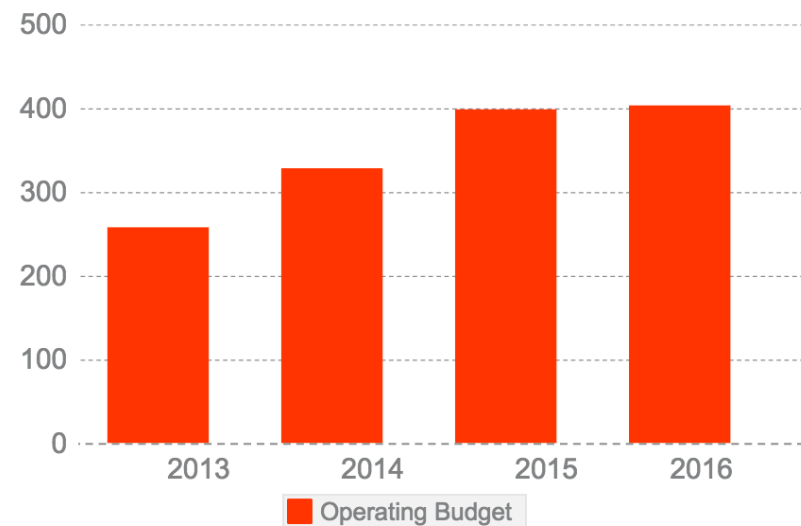
2016 EVENT PROFIT MARGINS



2016 EXPENSES



ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET, 2014-2016



WHAT'S
going on

IMPACT
HUB DC

M

BRIGHT CARBON 5TH FLOOR 8am-5pm

T

RESOURCE GENERATION 5TH FLOOR 7-9PM

W

Intro to Fundraising Planning!
12:00 - 2:00 pm
@ CARACAS

Tell Your Story!
Storytelling for
Funding 6:30-8:30 pm

Film Screening:
When Elephants
Fight 6:30-8:00 pm

T

ULAB live lecture
9:30-12:30pm.

LUNCH & LEARN
IS Equity Grantfinding the
right Spark for your
business? 12:00-2:00pm

Unlike
The Trap
Trap

BRING A FRIEND FRIDAY

F

STARTING BLOG 3RD FLOOR 2AM-6AM
INFLUENCE DATA 5TH FLOOR 4AM-5PM

S/S

STARTING
GREATER
NOIR MAS

30m, 30m
ART GALITON
-12AM





2016: On Your Marks, Get Set, ...

Our two themes for 2016 were Systems and Partnerships. We made great strides on Systems by improving the application platform, payment gateway, and communications management systems. We also launched a successful pro-bono coaching program and improved the materials For Fellows on the website. We did not make similar progress on Partnerships.

We are coming out of 2016 poised to GO. And the world needs us to do so. We have a model that works, three steady years of excellence, scalable systems, a talented team, and a kick-ass community.

2017: GO.

Let's do this. In 2017, our two themes are Growth* and Sizzle.

Growth*: Growth for growth's sake is the definition of cancer. However, the growth of an effective solution, in service of an important mission, is progress. This year our primary focus is to secure the resources and talent we will need to fund StartingBloc's vision. We plan to raise at least \$100,000 in 2017, in order to develop new programs for our Fellows and prepare to launch an Institute outside of the US.

Sizzle: We use the “steak & sizzle” analogy all the time. Every organization out there offers a product or service (the steak), and markets their product or service (the sizzle). StartingBloc make an incredible steak. Our work in 2017 is to amplify our sizzle by finding a resonant message, securing great media, and growing the reach of our organization.

Thank You

StartingBloc's deepest strength is our community. Our Fellows, Mentors, Speakers, and Champions are our biggest advocates, they understand the power of this community, and they consistently show up and contribute. To all of you, we are profoundly grateful.

Through this community, we are astonished and enlivened every day with small reminders that community, collective action, and the triumph of the commons have the power to fundamentally transform our world.

Stay strong. We got this.

“Now is the time to resist the slightest extension in the boundaries of what is right and just. Now is the time to speak up and to wear as a badge of honor the opprobrium of bigots. Now is the time to confront the weak core at the heart of America’s addiction to optimism; it allows too little room for resilience, and too much for fragility. Hazy visions of ‘healing’ and ‘not becoming the hate we hate’ sound dangerously like appeasement. The responsibility to forge unity belongs not to the denigrated but to the denigrators. The premise for empathy has to be equal humanity; it is an injustice to demand that the maligned identify with those who question their humanity.”

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



Sydney
Grew